

RABIES AND YOUR PET

April 24, 2020

ATTENTION PET OWNERS! Within the last two weeks, the Hampton Health Department has received several reports of household pets encountering wildlife that are high risk for having rabies. Additionally, since April 1, 2020 two raccoons in Hampton tested positive for rabies.

Here is what you need to know:

- Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. It is almost always fatal, unless preventive treatment is administered **before symptoms develop**.
 - The rabies virus is in the saliva and the brain of rabid animals. It can be transmitted through a bite or by getting saliva or brain tissue in the eyes, nose, mouth or in an open wound. Rabies cannot be transmitted by blood, feces, urine or by just petting an animal.
 - A rabies-infected animal may act normal. Do not rely on how healthy an animal looks to determine if you or your pet has been exposed!
 - Bites are the most common way rabies spreads!
 - Only mammals get rabies; birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians do not. Wild animals frequently diagnosed with rabies and considered high risk are raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Cats are the most common domestic animal diagnosed with rabies. Rabbits, squirrels, rats and mice, and small pets like gerbils and hamsters seldom get rabies.
 - Rabies can be prevented in cats, dogs, ferrets and some livestock with **rabies vaccination**.
 - If your pet is attacked or bitten by a wild animal, report it to the Hampton Health Department or Hampton Animal Response Team and be prepared to assist with rabies exposure response activities such as booster vaccination and confinement.
- Failure to vaccinate your pet against rabies could lead to dire consequences!**



Most exposures involving wildlife occur because most owners don't scan their property before they let their pets out. The Hampton Animal Response Team recommends that citizens monitor their pets while they are outside, never leaving them unattended. Whether your property is fenced in or not, monitoring your pets reduces the chances of an attack from other domestic animals that may be stray, as well as wildlife. With spring here, many newborn wild animals have made their way on our properties. We would simply ask that owners take extra precautions to scan their yards for any stray animals and stay outside with their pets so you can keep them safe and enjoy the warmer weather together!

How can You learn more about rabies?

- If you have concerns about rabies, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>.
- Visit the Virginia Department of Health's Rabies Control page at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-epidemiology/rabies-control/>.
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.
- Contact the Hampton Health Department Environmental Health Office at 757-727-2574